DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 880 IR 052 929

AUTHOR Berkowitz, Robert E.; Eisenberg, Michael B.
TITLE The Curriculum Roles and Responsibilities of Library Media Specialists. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, Syracuse, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-89-3
PUB DATE Jul 89
CONTRACT RI88062008
NOTE 4p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, 030 Huntington Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-2340 (free while supply lasts).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; *Guidelines; *Library Role; *Media Specialists
IDENTIFIERS *Information Power

ABSTRACT

This digest brings together the various views on curriculum-related roles for library media specialists. The first section considers reasons why a disparity between theory and practice exists in regard to the involvement of library media specialists as curriculum consultants. Several sources addressing this issue are reviewed in the second section. In the third section, responsibilities of the library media specialist as information consultant and actions necessary for library media specialists to fulfill their curriculum-related roles are listed. These responsibilities and actions are drawn from "Information Power," the new national library media program guidelines from the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology. The fourth section summarizes the relevant ideas in three recent works offering new insights into curriculum responsibilities: (1) "Taxonomies of the School Library Media Program" (David V. Loertscher); (2) "Helping Teachers Teach" (Philip Turner); and (3) "Curriculum Initiative: An Agenda and Strategy for Library Media Programs" (Michael B. Eisenberg and Robert E. Berkowitz). (19 references) (MES)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED308880

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

# THE CURRICULUM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

ERIC Digest
EDO-89-3

July 1989

by

Robert E. Berkowitz

and

Michael B. Eisenberg

IR052929

ERIC

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources

Syracuse University
School of Education • School of Information Studies
030 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, New York 13244-2340
(315) 443-3640

ERIC DIGEST

July 1989 EDO-89-3

# THE CURRICULUM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

by Robert E. Berkowitz and Michael B. Eisenberg

## Introduction

Today's school library media specialists are promoted at professional conferences and workshops and in the literature as active, involved information professionals. But what does this actually mean? The new national library media program guidelines, *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1988), outlines three major action roles for the library media specialist: teacher, information specialist, and instructional consultant. The teaching role, relating to instruction in library and information skills, has been widely discussed (e.g., Walker and Montgomery, 1983; Kuhlthau 1987) and is now familiar to library media specialists, teachers, and administrators. It is the other two roles which, while clearly related to curriculum and instruction in schools, lack widely accepted definitions. While these "non-teaching" functions are recognized as central to the purpose of school library media programs and also as involving much more than the traditional tasks of collection building and maintenance, there is considerable variability in the definitions and descriptions of curriculum-related roles. By bringing together the various views on curriculum-related roles found in studies, position papers, and reviews of the literature, this digest hopes to foster an understanding of how library media specialists can make a significant impact on curriculum and instruction.

## Defining the Role of the Media Specialist

Within the body of literature on the school library media specialist as curriculum consultant, two major issues become apparent: (1) school library media specialists have wanted to be actively involved in curriculum since the 1950's (Craver, 1986); and (2) many teachers and administrators still have a negative attitude toward school library media specialists as colleagues in curriculum (Barron, 1987). The literature regularly underscores the difference between library media specialists' potential as curriculum consultants and the actual extent of their involvement. While the reasons for the disparity between theory and practice are unclear, there are some possible explanations: (1) the curriculum role is undefined; (2) resources are limited; (3) incentives for greater involvement are lacking; and (4) teachers and administrators do not frequently use school library media specialists as curriculum consultants. In many situations, library media specialists are considered supplementary participants, if they are consulted at all, when curriculum concerns are addressed by teachers, administrators, and boards of education.

One way to overcome some of these limitations is through developing and publicizing a common understanding of the curriculum role of the library media specialist. This digest contributes to that end by bringing together the various definitions offered in journal articles and monographs. Some of these writings form the basis for *Information Power*. These new guidelines provide clear direction for establishing curriculum roles and should have a major impact within the field as well as throughout the broader educational environment. Additionally, recent books by Turner (1986), Loertscher (1988), and Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1988) present unique perspectives and should help in fulfilling the promises of *Information Power*.

## Background Literature

The previous national guidelines, *Media Programs: District and School* (AASL/AECT, 1975), as noted by Roggenbuck (1985) state that the media specialist's involvement in curriculum is in initiating and participating in curriculum development and implementation. Barron (1987) approaches instructional involvement of library media specialists from a traditional perspective, with curriculum consultation, the ultimate service and responsibility, described as information consultation. In writing on the instructional design role of library media specialists, Ely (Gerlach and Ely, 1980; Chisholm and Ely, 1976, 1979) calls for involvement within the teaching-learning process. The potential of library media specialists in a curriculum design role is directly related to their confidence and effectiveness in applying the skills associated with the use of instructional media for stated objectives. Pretlow (1987) makes the point that many school library media specialists began as classroom teachers and therefore are qualified as curriculum colleagues. Eisenberg (1987) notes increased interest on the part of school library media specialists in integrated curriculum planning. All of these sources, and others, point to the disparity between theory and practice. In addition, they validate the role of library media specialist as curriculum consultant.

## Information Power

As stated, *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* addresses school library media specialists as involved members of a curriculum team. "A fundamental responsibility of the library media specialist is to provide the leadership and expertise necessary to ensure that the library media program is an integral part of the instructional program of the school" (AASL/AECT, 1988). *Information Power* offers a vision that encourages involvement at all levels, from definition and conception to organization and management. With respect to the library media specialist as an instructional consultant, *Information Power* lists four responsibilities:

- participating in curriculum design and assessment,
- helping teachers develop instructional activities,
- providing expertise in materials and technology, and
- translating curricular needs into library media program goals and objectives. (p.35)

These responsibilities are expanded into actions that are necessary for school library media specialists to successfully fulfill their curriculum-related roles and responsibilities:

- Library media specialists participate in building, district, department, and grade level curriculum development and assessment projects on a regular basis.
- Library media specialists offer teachers assistance in using information resources, acquiring and assessing instructional materials, and incorporating information skills into the classroom curriculum.
- Library media specialists use a systematic instructional development process in working with teachers to improve instructional activities.
- Library media specialists provide leadership in the assessment, evaluation, and implementation of information and instructional technologies. (p. 39)

Aimed at administrators, teachers, school boards, and community members as well as library media professionals, *Information Power* is useful for improving the educational community's understanding of the library media center as a resource and the library media specialist as an involved member in curriculum development. For library media personnel, it suggests specific goals by which the new roles might be developed and benchmarks for evaluating program success.

## Loertscher, Turner, Eisenberg/Berkowitz

As noted above, three recent works offer new insights into curriculum responsibilities and suggestions for moving library media programs to "center stage" in the educational process. While sharing a common understanding of the active curriculum role of library media programs, each work presents unique ideas.

In *Taxonomies of the School Library Media Program* (1988), Loertscher outlines eleven levels of school library media specialists' involvement with curriculum and instruction. This spectrum of roles is divided into three general categories: solid warehousing services, direct services to teachers and students, and resource-based teaching, the greatest professional involvement occurring in the latter. At the bottom of Loertscher's scale, the library media specialist has no involvement. At Level 8, scheduled planning in the support role, the library media specialist begins limited involvement with curriculum planning. Finally, at Level 11, curriculum development, the library media specialist is an integrally involved curriculum consultant.

Turner, in *Helping Teachers Teach* (1985), identifies three global curriculum-related activities performed by library media specialists:

- promoting reading and viewing by children and young adults,
- providing library instruction and reference services, and
- helping teachers in the design, implementation and evaluation of instruction.

Difficulty implementing these activities within library media programs thus far is attributed, in great part, to the reluctance of library media specialists to assume new roles. Faced with "a set of expectations and terminology which [are] foreign and often intimidating," library media specialists are unwilling to abandon their traditional roles and adopt new roles as instructional consultants (p. 11). Turner recognizes the importance of library media specialists' potential contribution in all three curricular activities. However, he contends that their short-term impact will be least in the area of instructional design, due to limited professional training for this task and the scarcity of other resources required for change.

In *Curriculum Initiative: An Agenda and Strategy for Library Media Programs* and its accompanying *Resource Companion*, Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1988a, 1988b) assert that library media specialists' roles are becoming redefined due to technology, the "information explosion," a renewed emphasis on lifelong learning skills, and an increasing acceptance of additional responsibilities by library media specialists. They outline five emergent roles based on traditional functions:

(1) collection management based on a unified media concept,
(2) promotion of literature and guidance in the use of media,
(3) teaching information skills through integration with classroom curriculum,
(4) acting as a catalyst or agent of change through awareness of technology and consultation on curriculum and instructional design, and
(5) assuming information management responsibilities beyond the walls of the centralized library media center facility.

They further present and define a broad view of the curriculum role of the library media specialist as an interrelationship among five areas of responsibility:

- Resources Provision
- Reading Guidance and Literature Appreciation
- Information Service
- Curriculum Consultation Service
- Curriculum Development

Eisenberg and Berkowitz summarize the curriculum development role as one which includes "the articulation of purpose, goals, objectives, clearly stated learning outcomes, and sound research based approaches to achieving (curriculum-related) goals" (1988a, p. 97). This definition is as applicable to any content area as it is to the school library media instructional program, and it is equally acceptable to teachers and administrators.

## Summary

Throughout the body of well-accepted literature in the field of school library media, authors call for various levels of involvement by library media specialists in curriculum and instruction and decry the disparity between the profession's ability to be increasingly active and its actual level of participation. Although many library media specialists remain uninvolved in curriculum matters, their need to become intimately involved in curriculum related decision-making and activities is apparent.

While explanations of various authors differ in wording and emphasis, there is general agreement that library media specialists must be able to:

- provide necessary information and resources for curriculum
- consult on information use and related concerns in curriculum and instruction, and
- work together with teachers to design, implement, and evaluate curriculum and instruction.

*Information Power* reasserts that library media specialists have the responsibility to accept roles and responsibilities at the highest levels of curriculum development. Given the trends in education and the rate at which information is produced, school library media specialists find themselves at the crux of change, finally in a position to narrow the gap between theory and practice.

## Bibliography


Aaron, Shirley L. "Teaming for Learning" *School Media Quarterly* (Spring 1976):215-218.

American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology. *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1988.

American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology. *Media Programs: District and School*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1975.

Barron, Daniel D. "Communicating What SLM Specialists Do: The Evaluation Process." *School Library Journal* 33, no. 6 (March, 1987): 95-99.

Chisholm, Margaret E. and Ely, Donald P. *Media Personnel in Education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

Chisholm, Margaret E. and Ely, Donald P. *Instructional Design and the Library Media Specialist*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1979.

Craver, Kathleen W. "The Changing Instructional Role of the High School Library Media Specialist: 1950-84." *School Library Media Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1986):183-191.

Eisenberg, Michael. "Changing Roles of the Media Specialist." ERIC Digest, Syracuse, New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, 1987.

Eisenberg, Michael B. and Berkowitz, Robert E. *Curriculum Initiative: An Agenda and Strategy for Library Media Programs*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1988a

Eisenberg, Michael B. and Berkowitz, Robert E. *Resource Companion for Curriculum Initiative: An Agenda and Strategy for Library Media Programs*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1988b

Gerlach, Vernon and Ely, Donald. *Teaching and Media: A Systematic Approach*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

Kies, Cosette. *Projecting a Positive Image through Public Relations*, Chicago: American Association of School Librarians/American Library Association, 1978.

Kuhlthau, Carol, "Information Skills for an Information Society: A Review of Research." ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources: Syracuse, New York, 1987.

Loertscher, David V. *Taxonomies of the School Library Media Program*. Englewood, Co.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc. 1988.

Pretlow, Delores Z. " School Libraries: A Time for Change." *School Library Journal* 34, no. 2 (October 1987): 48.

Roggenbuck, Mary June. "Curriculum Involvement: choices and challenges for the school library media specialist." *Catholic Library World* 57, no. 3(November/December, 1985): 125-132.

Salle, Ellen M. "Riding the Wave of the Future: Media Specialists Face a New Age." *School Library Journal*, (March 1983): 126.

Turner, Philip. *Helping Teachers Teach*. Littleton, Co.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1985.

Walker, Thomas and Montgomery, Paula. *Teaching Media Skills*, Littleton, Co.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1983.



*This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract RI88062008. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.*